

October 3, 2013

CA Department of Water Resources
Division of IRWM
Financial Assistance Branch
Post Office Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236

Attn: Keith Wallace

In regard to: Public Comment: Proposition 84 IRWM Grant Program – Round 2

Dear Mr. Wallace:

The Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, in partnership with Groundwork San Diego Chollas Creek, submits this letter in support of the Integrated Resource Water Management (IRWM) application from the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA). Our collaborative project, *Chollas Creek Integration Project – Phase II*, was recommended by the San Diego IRWM Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) as one of seven projects included in the CWA's application for funding under the Proposition 84 Round 2 Implementation Grant program. We were extremely disappointed to learn that the Department of Water Resources is recommending funding only 50% of the \$10,511,225 grant request from SDCWA.

We strongly urge reconsideration of this decision and 100% funding of the grant amount for our region requested by SDCWA. The Jacobs Center and Groundwork San Diego are nonprofit organizations encouraged to participate with municipal agencies in bringing to the table high priority projects that have the greatest impact on the large area, disadvantaged communities with water quality, flooding, watershed health and other issues public germane to the intent of Prop. 84 legislation and to the SD-IRWM Regional Plan. Under the IRWM 1 Implementation Grant cycle, we were awarded \$900,000 for Chollas Creek Integration Project – Phase 1 and to conduct a *Chollas Creek Opportunities Assessment* in support of the Chollas Creek Implementation Program adopted by the City of San Diego Council. IRWM Round 2 funding builds on Round 1 engineering and construction activities and would cover critical flood mitigation, soil erosion prevention, and invasive plants removal for the Northwest Village section (2A) of the south branch of Chollas Creek. Additional Prop. 84 funding (\$1,024,000) from the Strategic Resources Council "Urban Greening" program will be used to construct trails and for landscaping along this segment to support public access and recreational benefits from the creek for the community.

The Pueblo watershed has historically been neglected and damaged through decades of poor stewardship and economic disinvestment in the older urban communities established along Chollas Creek. The Jacobs Center is the operating arm of a private foundation, Jacobs Family Foundation, dedicated to improving the physical, social and economic environment of southeastern San Diego, which has an area median income of \$34,000, equivalent to half that of the greater San Diego region. The foundation has invested over \$4 million in private funding to date in restoring and enhancing Chollas Creek within one of the most blighted areas of southeastern San Diego. The extraordinary resources

(money and staff time) required to prepare an IRWM project application and administer the grant are scaled to larger-resourced municipal water-related agencies. Extended IRWM grant award, contract finalization and payment periods also are formidable challenges affecting project phasing when leveraging multiple grant sources. The nature of local projects in poorer revitalizing neighborhoods such as ours requires multiple private and public investments, with each funding resource carrying its own set of complex tracking and administrative obligations. For this reason, the actual cost burden is proportionately greater on NGO's, which have to raise money through grants and donations, than it would be on publicly funded municipal agencies.

The Jacobs Center and Groundwork have worked diligently with SD-CWA over several months to address the IRWM implementation grant criteria through our project description and supporting data. Because our original IRWM Round 2 grant request was for more than \$1 million was reduced by SD-CWA to \$500,000, we have actively been seeking additional sources of large-scale grant funding to complete the Northwest Village Creek improvements within a severely constricted timeframe.

Again, we urge DWR to fully fund the IRWM Round 2 Implementation grant amount requested by SD-CWA. The impact of this funding, in terms of our *Chollas Creek Integration Project – Phase II*, is critical to the successful restoration and preservation of a key component of San Diego's Pueblo watershed and the revitalization of adjacent disadvantaged communities.

Sincerely,



Reginald Jones, President & CEO
Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation



Leslie Reynolds, Director
Groundwork San Diego

cc:

Senate Member Marty Block (District 39)
Senate Member Ben Hueso (District 40)
Assembly Member Shirley Weber (District 79)
Assembly Member Brian Maienschein (District 77)
Assembly Member Toni Atkins (District 78)
Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez (District 80)

